



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
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CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION
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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 26, 2010

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Attorney General McGraw Issues Alert To Eastern Panhandle Residents About Latest Round of "Grandparents" Scam

Attorney General Darrell McGraw is warning grandparents across West Virginia—especially in the Eastern Panhandle—to beware of the "Grandparents" scam which is making its rounds again. In this scam, con-artists pose as grandchildren and ask their "grandparents" to wire money via wire services or to send money via money orders.

"In order to avoid becoming a victim, grandparents need to be completely certain that the person on the other end of the phone is in fact their grandchild," said Attorney General McGraw.

In the summer of 2009, the Attorney General was alerted of several instances of the "Grandparents" scam. One such instance happened to Hazel Lilly of Hurricane. The latest round of phone calls appears to be targeting West Virginia's eastern panhandle that includes the counties of Morgan, Berkeley, and Jefferson.

Virginia Sine, Circuit Clerk of Berkeley County, contacted the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division to alert the office about a constituent who had called her for help. The constituent stated she received a telephone call on Monday, February 22, 2010, from a caller who identified himself as her grandson. He stated that he was in Canada and had been arrested after a small accident and that he had been drinking. He said he needed money for a lawyer. He asked the grandmother not to tell anyone, especially his parents, and he promised to pay her back. Upset, the grandmother went to Western Union as instructed and wired money to her "grandson" in Canada.

On Tuesday, February 23, 2010, the constituent received another telephone call and her "grandson" stated he needed more money for a bail bondsman. Again, the grandmother went to Western Union and wired money to Canada.

On Wednesday, February 24, 2010, the grandmother received a phone call from an individual who identified himself as a Canadian State Trooper. He stated that due to the accident a pregnant woman had lost her fetus and that her grandson was in some real trouble. In order to help her grandson, he needed additional money wired to him for legal assistance.

In tears the grandmother went to where her husband was working to discuss the situation with him before wiring any more money. Her husband had her talk to a retired West Virginia State Trooper he knew who told her that she had been scammed. The lady called her grandson on his cell phone to find out he had never been in Canada and had never received any money from her.

Western Union is unable to assist this lady in recovering her money, as it has already been picked up by the crooks.

"Be suspicious of any request you get over the telephone asking you to transfer money via wire services," said McGraw warned.

In addition to verifying the identity of the person on the other end of the phone, McGraw suggested grandparents take several steps to protect themselves, including:

Don't offer information. If the caller says, "Hi Grandpa, this is your grandson speaking," be sure to ask "Which one?" Typically, if the scam artist is questioned, he will hang up.

Offer to call your grandchild back.

Don't give out bank account numbers, credit card numbers, social security numbers or any personally-identifying numbers over the phone to anyone who calls you on the phone.

"We are also asking employees at locations that issue wire transfers to be especially vigilant and on the lookout for this type of fraudulent activity," McGraw added.

If you believe you have already been the victim of this scam—or if you receive a telephone call that sounds like this type of scam—contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division immediately at 1-800-368-8808.

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